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SUBJECT: CEPPS PROJECT - SUPPORT FOR POLITICAL
PROCESSES-JORDAN

Ref: MWilliams DCHA/DG Email - Sept 10

1. Mission welcomes the subject proposal by IRI and NDI under Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) to be carried out in Jordan between August 2004 and January 2006. We would, however, like to highlight some political sensitivities regarding assistance to and contact with individual political parties. Our main concern is that USG support should not create the public perception that we are favoring any particular political faction. The CEPPS activities should be as generic as possible and open in principle to all parties and political activists, as well as community leaders and other concerned Jordanians who want to strengthen popular awareness and engagement in the democratic process.

2. While most of the CEPPS project, as we understand it, would be perceived in Jordan as generic and open to all, we are concerned with the proposal (page 4, first para under "Promoting More Responsive and Accountable Political Parties") that IRI conduct "individual consultations and trainings with the four or five most viable political parties". We believe that such targeted assistance could both hurt the participating parties' public standing, given public hostility toward US Policy, and be misinterpreted as United States interference in domestic Jordanian politics.

3. Other proposed CEPPS activities, such as those mentioned below, appear likely to be of use in advancing political reform. Because they are not targeted at particular groups, and potentially make assistance available to any bona fide group that approaches us, they are far less likely to provide ammunition to anti-US and anti-MEPI voices. Most of them closely complement ongoing Mission-supported activities.

--NDI: Technical assistance and training resources to active parliamentary blocs and their corresponding political parties, working through the Permanent Bureau of the Lower House of Parliament. Providing such programs through the Permanent Bureau would mitigate the impression of direct USG support for any particular party.

--IRI: Periodic polling on Jordanian public opinion towards political parties and governance. This research would be useful, provided it does not duplicate polls recently undertaken by organizations such as the Center for Strategic Studies at Jordan University.

--NDI: Women's forum on involvement in politics. This generic, open-to-all program would complement the Mission's speaker, IV and other programs aimed at strengthening women's role in politics. In training cadres for the 2007 elections, NDI should ensure that such training is open to all candidates on a non-partisan basis, and that all participants are supported on an equal basis.

--IRI: Series of 12 workshops for youth and women on political participation and the New Generation Mock Parliaments. These activities would likewise complement other Mission programs.

--IRI: Enhancing capacity of local elected officials. The training and consultations for municipal councils would complement other Mission programs aimed at decentralization and responsiveness of local government.

4. We look forward to coordinating closely with IRI, NDI and MEPI offices on this project.